



Scorching heat wave in U.S. Northwest forecast to last longer



A closed sign is posted outside Rico Loverde's Monster Smash Burgers food cart in Portland, Ore., on Wednesday, July 27, 2022.

Associated Press

By **CLAIRE RUSH**
Associated Press/Report for America

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The scorching heat spell in the Pacific Northwest is now expected to last longer than forecasters had initially pre-

dicted, setting parts of the normally temperate region on course to break heat wave duration records. "We warmed up the forecast for the latter part of this week," said David Bishop, a meteorologist for the

National Weather Service in Portland, Oregon. His office is now forecasting up to 101 degrees Fahrenheit (38.3 Celsius) for Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Continued on next page

Minister of Transportation agrees on bus fare increase



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Continued from Front

Portland already hit 102 F (38.9 C) on Tuesday, a new record daily high, prompting the National Weather Service to extend the excessive heat warning for the city from Thursday through Saturday evening. Seattle on Tuesday also reported a new record daily high of 94 F (34.4 C).

The duration of the heat wave puts Oregon's biggest city on course to tie its longest streak of six consecutive days of 95 F (35 C) or higher.

Climate change is fueling longer heat waves in the Pacific Northwest, a region where weeklong heat spells were historically rare, according to climate experts. Heat-related 911 calls in Portland have tripled in recent days, from an estimated eight calls on Sunday to 28 calls on Tuesday, said Dan Douthit, a spokesperson for the city's Bureau of Emergency Management. Most calls involved a medical response, Douthit added.

Multnomah County, which includes Portland, said there has been an uptick in the number of people visiting emergency departments for heat-related symptoms.

Emergency department visits "have remained elevated since Sunday," the county said in a statement. "In the past three days, hospitals have treated 13 people for heat illness, when they would normally



Matthew Carr cools off in the Salmon Street Springs fountain before returning to work cleaning up trash on his bicycle in Portland, Ore., Tuesday, July 26, 2022.

Associated Press

expect to see two or three." People working or exercising outside, along with older people, were among those taken to emergency departments, the state-meat added.

On Wednesday, the Oregon State Medical Examiner's Office said at least two people have died from suspected hyperthermia during the heat wave. One death occurred in Portland on Monday, the Multnomah County Medical Examiner's Office said.

The state medical examiner's office said the heat-related death designation is preliminary and could change after further investigation. The official cause

of death may not be confirmed until several months later.

People in Portland's iconic food cart industry are among those who work outside. Many food trucks have shut down as sidewalks sizzle.

Rico Loverde, the chef and owner of the food cart Monster Smash Burgers, said the temperature inside his cart is generally 20 degrees hotter than the outdoor temperature, making it 120 F (48.9 C) inside his business this week.

Loverde said he closes down if it reaches above 95 F (35 C) because his refrigerators overheat and shut down. Last week, even with

slightly cooler temperatures in the mid-90s, Loverde got heat stroke from working in his cart for hours, he said.

"It hurts, it definitely hurts. I still pay my employees when we're closed like this because they have to pay the bills too, but for a small business it's not good," he said Tuesday.

Multnomah County said its four emergency overnight cooling shelters were at half capacity on Tuesday with 130 people spending the night. But anticipating more demand, officials have decided to expand capacity at the four sites to accommodate nearly 300 people. The overnight shelters will remain open at least

through Friday morning. William Nonluecha, who lives in a tent in Portland, sought out shade with some friends as the temperature soared on Wednesday afternoon. Nonluecha was less than a minute's walk from a cooling shelter set up by local authorities but wasn't aware it was open. He said the heat in his tent was almost unbearable.

His friend Mel Taylor, who was homeless last year but now has transitional housing, said during last summer's record-breaking heat wave a man in a tent near his died from heat exhaustion and no one realized it. He's afraid the same thing might happen this summer. "He was in his tent for like a week and the smell, that's how they figured out that he was dead," Taylor said. "It's sad."

Residents and officials in the Northwest have been trying to adjust to the likely reality of longer, hotter heat waves following last summer's deadly "heat dome" weather phenomenon that prompted record temperatures and deaths.

About 800 people died in Oregon, Washington and British Columbia during a 2021 heat wave that hit in late June and early July. The temperature at the time soared to an all-time high of 116 F (46.7 C) in Portland and smashed heat records in cities and towns across the region. Many of those who died were older and lived alone. □

Obama White House portrait to be unveiled at Sept. 7 event



President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama applaud former President George H.W. Bush and former first lady Barbara Bush, not seen, during the portrait unveiling ceremony for former President George W. Bush and former first lady Laura Bush portraits, May 31, 2012, in the East Room of the White House in Washington.

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Barack Obama's presidential portrait will be unveiled at the White House in a September ceremony hosted by his former No. 2, President Joe Biden.

Portraits of the former president and Michelle Obama will be presented in the East Room, as is traditional, on Sept. 7, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Thursday.

"That'll be very exciting," Jean-Pierre said.

It will mark the first time the former first lady has returned to the White House since her husband left office in January 2017. The

former president previously returned in April to mark the 12th anniversary of his signature health care law — and spent more than four hours meeting with Biden and greeting White House staff.

President Biden and first lady Jill Biden will host the Obamas for the occasion. As with previous such ceremonies, the artists and details about the artwork won't be released until the day of the ceremony.

The private and nonprofit White House Historical Association has arranged portraits of recent presidents and first ladies since 1965,

when it negotiated acquiring a portrait of former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter unveiled the official White House portraits of former President Gerald Ford and former first lady Betty Ford in an East Room ceremony.

Carter later asked not to have a ceremony, according to the association, but most other former first couples have had one in their years since leaving office. The Obamas hosted the May 2012 unveiling of the portraits of former President George W. Bush and former first lady Laura Bush. □

U.S. to fill border wall gaps at open area near Yuma, Arizona

ANITA SNOW

PHOENIX (AP) — The Biden administration on Thursday authorized completion of the Trump-funded U.S.-Mexico border wall in an open area of southern Arizona near Yuma that has become one of the busiest corridors for illegal crossings.

Biden had pledged during his campaign to cease all future wall construction, but the administration later agreed to some barriers, citing safety. The Department of Homeland Security said Thursday the work to close four wide gaps in the wall near Yuma will better protect migrants who can slip down a slope or drown walking through a low section of the Colorado River.

The agency said in a statement that Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas authorized completion of the project near the Morelos Dam, reflecting the administration's "priority to deploy modern, effective border measures and also improving safety and security along the Southwest Border." It was initially to be funded by the Defense Department but will now be paid for out of Homeland Security's 2021 budget.

The Border Patrol Yuma sector has quickly emerged as the third busiest of nine sectors along the border, with much of the traffic funneling through the Morelos Dam. Migrants arrive in the small town of Algodones and walk unencumbered



In this Thursday, June 10, 2021, file photo, a pair of migrant families from Brazil pass through a gap in the border wall to reach the United States after crossing from Mexico to Yuma, Ariz., to seek asylum.

across a concrete ledge on the dam to U.S. soil, where they wait for Border Patrol agents to take them into custody.

Completion of the wall was at the top of former President Donald Trump's agenda, and border security remains a potent issue for candidates of both parties going into this year's primary elections. President Joe Biden halted new wall construction after he took office, but he has since made closing the gaps just south of Yuma a priority.

Democratic U.S. Sen. Mark Kelly of Arizona, who is seeking his party nomination's next week to defend the seat in November, has

pressed the Biden administration to close the gaps, calling them a challenge for officials trying to secure the border.

Agents stopped migrants more than 160,000 times from January through June in the Yuma sector, nearly quadruple from the same period last year. The only other sectors with more traffic were Del Rio and Rio Grande Valley in South Texas.

The area has been especially attractive to Colombians, Venezuelans and others who have flown to Mexicali, Mexico, and taken a short bus or taxi ride to Algodones to walk across the border before being

released into the United States.

But Arizona environmentalist Myles Traphagen, who has been mapping ecological damage left by border wall construction under the Trump administration, said that closing the gaps won't be much of a deterrent.

Traphagen said the Yuma area has "become the new Ellis Island for Arizona, with people arriving there from countries as disparate as Ethiopia, Cuba, Russia, Ukraine, India, Colombia and Nicaragua.

"People have traveled half way around the globe on planes, trains and automobiles," he said, "so to expect that closing four small gaps

is going to make them turn around and book a return flight on Air Ethiopia is sheer fallacy."

A 5-year-old migrant girl crossing the water in a group drowned near the dam June 6 when she became separated from her mother. The child's body was later found in the river. U.S. officials didn't release the girl's identity or nationality. But Jamaican newspapers have said she was believed to be from that country.

It was unclear when construction would begin. The statement said officials will move "as expeditiously as possible, while still maintaining environmental stewardship" by consulting affected parties.

Advocates in San Diego say the Border Patrol there has told them of plans to erect two 30-foot- (9.1-meter) high bollard-style barriers through the border's iconic Friendship Park. Like the Yuma project, the additional construction was funded during Trump's administration but not completed before his presidency ended.

The new barriers will replace shorter walls and severely impede cross-border views, including to San Diego's skyline from Tijuana, said the Rev. John Fanestil of Friends of Friendship Park, a group that advocates for public access to the binational park inaugurated in 1971 by then first lady Pat Nixon. □

Associated Press

New USPS election division will oversee mail-in ballots

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States Postal Service is creating a division to handle election mail issues as part of an effort to ensure swift and secure delivery of ballots for the 2022 mid-term election, officials said Wednesday.

The idea behind the creation of the Election and Government Mail Services is to have a permanent division dedicated to dealing with election matters, instead of handling issues one at a time as in the past. Adrienne Marshall, execu-

tive director of the division, said Wednesday that the services will oversee "election mail strike teams" in every local and district community to address any problems that might arise.

"We are fully committed to the secure and timely delivery of the nation's election mail," she said. The Postal Service was dogged by backlogs and questions ahead of the 2020 presidential election, in which more than 135 million ballots were delivered to and from voters. Despite the

pandemic, the Postal Service said it delivered 97.9% of ballots from voters to election officials within three days, and 99.89% of ballots were delivered within seven days, in the 2020 election. The Postal Service is sending guidance letters to election officials in each state and territory this week. Postal workers are already hard at work delivering ballots this year. So far, nearly 40 million ballots have been mailed to and from voters during primary elections, officials said. □



A USPS logo adorns the back doors of United States Postal Service delivery vehicles as they proceed westbound along 20th Street from Stout Street and the main post office in downtown Denver, Wednesday, June 1, 2022.

Associated Press

Georgia county files suit to force land sale for spaceport

By **RUSS BYNUM**
Associated Press

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP) — A Georgia county has filed a lawsuit seeking to force a company to sell land on which the county has long planned to build a launch-pad for commercial rockets.

Commissioners in coastal Camden County said in a statement Thursday that Union Carbide Co.'s refusal to sell the 4,000 acre (1,600 hectare) property, if allowed to stand, "will cause the County the loss of the Spaceport Project as well as an enormous financial loss in excess of \$11 million." County officials have spent that sum over the past decade seeking to license and build Spaceport Camden, a site for launching satellites into space. Opponents say the project would pose safety and environmental risks that outweigh any economic benefits. The county held a referendum in March in which a large majority voted to kill the land deal.

Commissioners opted to disregard the vote, which they contend violated Georgia's constitution. But Union Carbide balked at the county's efforts to move forward with closing



This artist's sketch provided by Spaceport Camden shows the launch pad complex of the proposed Spaceport Camden in Camden County, Ga.

Associated Press

on the property. The company said last week that the deal was off because it had been "repudiated" by voters.

The county filed a civil suit Wednesday in Camden County Superior Court in hopes of keeping the spaceport project alive. Commissioners said the company still has a "contractual obligation to sell the property."

"The County believes that Union Carbide's real reason for repudiating the contract had nothing to do with the referendum but was in-

stead to allow Union Carbide to make more money on the property than what the County had agreed to pay," the commissioners' statement said. "That is not a legitimate reason for repudiating a contract."

Union Carbide did not immediately respond to an email message seeking comment.

The county government in 2015 entered into an option agreement with the company to buy the land once the county obtained a spaceport operator license from the Federal Avi-

ation Administration.

The FAA awarded the license in December. But before county commissioners could close on the land, opponents forced a referendum on the project by gathering more than 3,500 petition signatures. The project was put to a vote in March, and 72% cast ballots to block the deal.

Commissioners have insisted the spaceport project would bring economic growth not just from rocket launches, but also by attracting related industries and tourists to the commu-

nity of 55,000 people on the Georgia-Florida line.

Opponents say building the spaceport on an industrial plot formerly used to manufacture pesticides and munitions would pose potential hazards.

Critics, including the National Park Service, have said rockets exploding soon after launch could rain fiery debris onto Little Cumberland Island, which has about 40 private homes, and neighboring Cumberland Island, a federally protected wilderness visited by about 60,000 tourists each year.

County commissioners hired consultants to study potential threats to the island. Their report concluded that "after routine operational risk mitigations are applied the overall risk for fire to Cumberland Island from a failed rocket launch was found to be so low as to not be credible."

Meanwhile, county officials are trying to have the referendum declared invalid by the Georgia Supreme Court. Their legal appeal argues that Georgia's constitution doesn't allow voters to veto government projects such as the spaceport. The court is scheduled to hear the case Aug. 23. □

Los Angeles County avoids new mask rule as COVID stabilizes



Travelers wear masks inside Union Station Thursday, July 28, 2022, in Los Angeles. **Associated Press**

Associated Press

By **CHRISTOPHER WEBER**
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Los Angeles County dropped a plan to impose a universal indoor mask mandate this week as COVID-19 in-

fections and rates of hospitalizations have stabilized, a top health official said Thursday.

Health director Barbara Ferrer said two weeks ago that the nation's most populous

county could again require face coverings if trends in hospital admissions continued under criteria set by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

On Thursday, she said the county managed to dodge imposition of the broad mask rule. The county remains at the "high" CDC level of community transmission, but it could drop to "medium" in coming weeks. Ferrer made the announcement during a briefing at which she displayed flat and declining data graphs. "As you can see, there's been a fairly steady decline in cases since July 23, potentially signaling the beginning of a downward trend in cases," she said. Hospitalizations are also down.

While masks won't be required in most indoor spaces, Ferrer reminded residents that face coverings are an effective tool to reduce spread.

As it has for most of the pandemic, LA County will still require masks in some indoor spaces, including health care facilities, Metro trains and buses, airports, jails and homeless shelters. The new mandate, which would have gone into effect Friday, would have expanded the requirement to all indoor public spaces, including shared offices, manufacturing facilities, warehouses, retail stores, restaurants and bars, theaters and schools.

Nationwide, the latest COVID-19 surge is driven by the highly transmissible

BA.5 variant, which now accounts for a majority of cases.

It has shown a remarkable ability to get around the protection offered by vaccination.

It's still unclear what enforcement of the health order might have looked like. Under past mandates, no individuals were cited for refusing masks, and officials favored educating people over issuing citations and fines.

Critics of a new mask rule have said they don't believe it would decrease or stop transmission rates. Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger said she was pleased with Ferrer's announcement because "unenforceable mandates don't work." □

Kim threatens to use nukes amid tensions with US, S. Korea

By HYUNG-JIN KIM

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) —

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un warned he's ready to use his nuclear weapons in potential military conflicts with the United States and South Korea, state media said Thursday, as he unleashed fiery rhetoric against rivals he says are pushing the Korean Peninsula to the brink of war.

Kim's speech to war veterans on the 69th anniversary of the end of the 1950-53 Korean War was apparently meant to boost internal unity in the impoverished country amid pandemic-related economic difficulties. While Kim has increasingly threatened his rivals with nuclear weapons, it's unlikely that he would use them first against the superior militaries of the U.S. and its allies, observers say.

"Our armed forces are completely prepared to respond to any crisis, and our country's nuclear war deterrent is also ready to mobilize its absolute power dutifully, exactly and swiftly in accordance with its mission," Kim said in Wednesday's speech, according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

He accused the United States of "demonizing"



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un delivers his speech during a ceremony to mark the 69th anniversary of the signing of the ceasefire armistice that ends the fighting in the Korean War, in Pyongyang, North Korea Wednesday, July 27, 2022.

Associated Press

North Korea to justify its hostile policies. Kim said regular U.S.-South Korea military drills that he claimed target the North highlight U.S. "double standards" and "gangster-like" aspects because it brands North Korea's routine military activities an apparent reference to its missile tests as provocations or threats.

Kim also alleged the new South Korean government of President Yoon Suk Yeol

is led by "confrontation maniacs" and "gangsters" who have gone further than previous South Korean conservative governments. Since taking office in May, the Yoon government has moved to strengthen Seoul's military alliance with the United States and bolster its own capacity to neutralize North Korean nuclear threats including a preemptive strike capability.

"Talking about military action against our nation, which possesses absolute weapons that they fear the most, is preposterous and is very dangerous suicidal action," Kim said. "Such a dangerous attempt will be immediately punished by our powerful strength and the Yoon Suk Yeol government and his military will be annihilated."

South Korea expressed "deep regret" over Kim's

threat and said it maintains a readiness to cope with any provocation by North Korea in "a powerful, effective manner."

In a statement read by spokesperson Kang In-sun, Yoon's presidential national security office said South Korea will safeguard its national security and citizens' safety based on a solid alliance with the United States. It urged North Korea to return to talks to take steps toward denuclearization. Earlier Thursday, South Korea's Defense Ministry repeated its earlier position that it's been boosting its military capacity and joint defense posture with the United States to cope with escalating North Korean nuclear threats.

In April, Kim said North Korea could preemptively use nuclear weapons if threatened, saying they would "never be confined to the single mission of war deterrent."

Kim's military has also test-launched nuclear-capable missiles that place both the U.S. mainland and South Korea within striking distance. U.S. and South Korean officials have repeatedly said in the past few months that North Korea is ready to conduct its first nuclear test in five years. □

Cars hit tires dumped on Dutch highway amid farmer protests

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) —

Cars crashed into tires and other garbage piled on a highway in the northern Netherlands in the early hours of Thursday, police said, as protests by radical farmers against government plans to rein in nitrogen emissions continued.

Prime Minister Mark Rutte branded the protests "unacceptable."

Police in the northern province of Friesland said nobody was injured when several cars were involved in an accident caused by dumped garbage, but warned motorists to be alert to "extremely dangerous situations" caused by the farmers' protest actions.

A handful of new protests took place overnight, including farmers burning hay bales near a major highway, despite police and security authorities appealing to farmers Wednesday to halt the dumping.

"Protesting is a fundamental right and as long as it stays within the limits of the law, a lot is possible," the emergency services said in a joint statement. But they said the latest actions "seriously endanger road safety and can lead to life-threatening situations for road users."

In a sign of the increasingly radicalized farmer protests, cleanup operations have been hampered by intimidation of contractors hired to clear roads and by the

presence of asbestos in some of the piles of debris dumped on roads.

"Wilfully endangering others, damaging our infrastructure and threatening people who help clean up is beyond all limits," Rutte said in a tweet.

"These life-threatening actions must stop. There are plenty of other ways to express your dissatisfaction within the law. Most farmers do that," he added.

The farmers are angry at government targets for reining in emissions of nitrogen oxide and ammonia that they say threaten to decimate the farming industry and their way of life. The ruling coalition wants to cut emissions of pollutants by 50% nationwide by 2030



A man passes a tractor with a sign reading "Think What You Want to Eat Without Farmers" at a blockade outside a distribution center for supermarket chain Aldi in the town of Drachten, northern Netherlands, Monday, July 4, 2022.

Associated Press

to improve soil, air and water quality in an EU nation known for its intensive farming practices. It has called on provincial authorities to

draw up plans to reduce emissions and earmarked an extra 24.3 billion euros (\$24.6 billion) to fund the changes. □

Seeking new funds, Hamas raises taxes in impoverished Gaza

By **FARES AKRAM**

Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Gaza's Hamas rulers have imposed a slew of new taxes on imported clothes and office supplies just ahead of the new school year, sparking limited but rare protests in the impoverished coastal strip.

The move by the militant group comes at a time when Gaza's 2.3 million people are suffering not only from a 15-year Israeli-Egyptian blockade, but also from a new jump in prices caused by global supply-chain issues and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. "This is a wrong, oppressive decision that destroys the national economy," said Nahed al-Sawada, who imports clothes from China and Turkey.

A list by the Ministry of Economy includes planned taxes on items like packaged nuts, with an import tariff of 2,000 shekels (nearly \$600) per ton. In the past, nuts were imported tax free. The tariff on a ton of toilet paper rose from \$90 to \$580. The taxes are set to go into effect on Aug. 1.

The list also includes a tax of about \$3 on pair of jeans, and \$230 on a ton of plastic folders used to store papers. Demand for these items increases ahead of



A woman buys clothes on the main road of an outdoor clothes market in Gaza City, Monday, July 25, 2022.

Associated Press

the school year.

Emad Abdelhadi, a representative for Gaza's union of clothes' merchants, said a new pair of jeans sells for \$3 to \$10, and the new tax will pose an unfair burden on struggling consumers. In a territory suffering from rampant poverty and unemployment approaching 50%, he said many Gazans already look for used clothes. The new taxes, he said, "will deprive them of the ability to buy."

Gaza's economy has been hit hard by the Israeli-Egyptian blockade, imposed when Hamas seized power in 2007. Israel says the blockade is needed to prevent Hamas from arming, but critics say the restrictions, which include tight limits on exports, amount to collective punishment. Hamas' government is not internationally recognized and Israel and its Western allies consider the group, which opposes Israel's exis-

tence and has in the past staged deadly suicide bombings against Israelis, a terrorist organization. Israel and Hamas have fought four wars since the Hamas takeover, further straining the territory's run-down infrastructure. Electricity is in short supply, tap water undrinkable and the health care system is in shambles. With tens of thousands of civil servants to support, as well as its heavy spend-

ing on its military wing, it is no surprise that Hamas is seeking new sources of revenue. Still, the timing is questionable, coming at a time when the Russian invasion of Ukraine has driven up consumer prices worldwide.

Hamas authorities say the new taxes are meant to protect the local industries. But experts and business people challenge this argument, since badly needed raw materials are now being taxed.

Mohammed Abu Jayyab, an economist, said the taxes have failed to protect local manufacturers because the government still taxes raw materials and production lines. □

A spokesman for the Economy Ministry did not return requests for comment.

Hamas doesn't release figures on its funding resources or budgets, but the latest steps are part of a series of taxes targeting a wide array of sectors, from street vendors selling hot drinks to restaurants, home building and cars.

The government offers few services in exchange, and most aid and relief projects are covered by the international community. The funds help Hamas operate a government and powerful armed wing. □

Lightning kills nearly 50 this week in India's Uttar Pradesh



Women work in a paddy field adjacent to the field where another woman, Khusboo Bind, was killed by lightning on July 25 at Piparaon village on the outskirts of Prayagraj, in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, Thursday, July 28, 2022.

Associated Press

By **BISWAJEET BANERJEE**

Associated Press

LUCKNOW, India (AP) — Seven people, mostly farmers, were killed by lightning

in a village in India's northern Uttar Pradesh state, police said Thursday, bringing the death toll by lightning to 49 people in the state

this week.

The farmers had taken shelter under trees during a drenching monsoon rain when they were struck by lightning Tuesday and died instantly. The victims included four members of a family and some cattle grazers near the city of Kaushambi, according to police officer Hem Raj Meena. The high death toll has prompted the government to issue new guidelines for how people can protect themselves during a lightning storm, said state government spokesperson Shishir Singh.

"People are dying more from lightning than rain-related incidents, though this is the time when people (typically) die of floods

or other rain-related incidents," Singh said.

India's monsoon season runs from June through September.

Col. Sanjay Srivastava, whose organization Lightning India Resilient Campaign works with the Indian Meteorological Department, said lightning has killed nearly 750 people across India since April. That includes 20 people who died in eastern Bihar state in the past two days and 16 in Madhya Pradesh state in central India earlier this month.

Sunita Narain, director-general of the Center for Science and Environment, said global warming plays a role in the rising number of lightning strikes. A one-

degree-Celsius rise in temperature increases lightning by 12 times.

Srivastava said that deforestation, the depletion of bodies of water, and pollution all contribute to climate change, which leads to more lightning.

J P Gupta, director of the Meteorological Department, said thunderstorms and lightning have increased this year due to an increase in pollution levels. "High ground temperature leads to evaporation from water bodies that adds moisture to the atmosphere. The presence of aerosols due to air pollution creates favorable conditions for thunderclouds to trigger lightning activity," Gupta said. □

Minister of Transportation agrees on bus fare increase

Bus fare for Elderly Adults (60+) will remain fixed

ORANJESTAD – On Wednesday, July 27, minister of Transportation, Mr. Ursell Arends held a meeting with the United Bus Drivers (Chaufeurnan di Autobus Uni). After deliberations, minister Arends informed that the Government of Aruba and United Bus Drivers reached an agreement with which both parties are satisfied.

For this new agreement reached between the Government of Aruba and the United Bus Drivers, it was taken into consideration that the last time the bus fare was adjusted was in 2015. The standard fare will be increased with Afl. 1. It's important to note that the fare for Elderly Adults will remain fixed at Afl. 3.

Minister Arends said in a press release that he understands that for some time already the situation was financially difficult for the bus operators. With the drastic price increase for fuel, this group found themselves 'in red'. Minister Arends said he was aware of the situation, and that first he approached the University of Aruba to task them with executing a study on the carrying capacity and after this, come with proposals for a management change, including a change in bus fare, amount of permits issued, etc. The results of this study are still spending, and it is planned to conclude in September 2022.

According to the press release it is also important to note that now the legal process will be started. Thus it is not fruitful to begin speculating at what moment the new fare will come into effect at this moment. Minister Arends said that he will make it a priority to execute the process as efficiently as possible, and will keep the group of bus drivers and the community of Aruba informed of all developments.

Minister Arends thanks the United Bus Drivers for the way in which they organized themselves, the way in which the deliberations were carried out, and he also thanks them for the cooperation and understanding to keep the fare without change – more favourably – for the Elderly Adults. "This proves that when we deliberate with respect and professionalism, we can achieve goals to benefit our community", the minister commented.

As Aruba Today reported, on July 15, small bus drivers came together and gathered in the parking lot of the Linear Park to march together, guided by the police, to the Bestuurskantoor – the government seat – to deliver a letter. The group United Bus Drivers handed a petition to the government to increase the bus fare with 1 florin, because their expenses are becoming too high to manage.

The drivers in their letter brought a

proposal to increase the fare in accordance with the increase in the

price of gasoline and diesel.



Plans underway for Carnival 2023

ORANJESTAD – In a friendly encounter, minister of Sports and Education, Endy Croes met with president of SMAC (Foundation for the Management of Aruba's

Carnival), Mr. Darren van Ommeren and the secretary of SMAC, Mrs. Edelysse Nicolaas.

During this meeting the

discussed various important topics regarding Aruba's carnival and they exchanged ideas and preparations for Carnival 2023. According to a press

release, they also talked about the vision of the new board of directors for the biggest cultural celebration of Aruba, for example, the possibilities to expand the celebrations for children. Here they discussed evaluating the possibility to have schools cooperate and see if there are more school groups which can be incorporated into the Children's Parade.

The second topic discussed was the possibility for SMAC to have its own office, a place from which they can carry out their operations. Currently SMAC doesn't have a fixed place.

To conclude, minister Croes wished the new board success with the preparations

for Carnival 2023.

On July 13, SMAC announced its new board, consisting of the following: President: Darren Van Ommeren (Gruponan Uni); Treasurer: Kiala Kock (Stichting Musica); Secretary: Edelysse Nicolaas (Gruponan Uni).

Board of directors: Sharisa Kamperveen (Gruponan Uni), Clarissa Arrindell (Gruponan Uni), Inky Richardson (Stichting Musica), Kathleen Green (Stichting Musica), Cheryldine Buckley (Stichting Musica), Haydy Boekhoudt (independent member), Zuleika Willems (Miembro Independiente), Javier van der Biezen (independent member).



Get it ALL done at Do It Center and Super Do It Center & Groceries

Noord – Sometimes all we need is one place where we can do all our shopping at once. Well, Do it center and Super Do it Center Groceries has it all. This is the largest, local owned Do it Center in the Caribbean and best of all a 100% locally owned family business.

How it all began

It was 1938 when Mr. Eric Ponson started his journey at General Store. Ponson did not hesitate and decided to buy General Store. Buying a store and thus going from employee to owner of a business with a debt of 11.000 guilders was not an easy task.

As the saying goes: "Behind every successful man, is a strong woman". In the case of Ponson, this was no different. As General Store progressed and slowly became successful, Mrs. Irene Ponson, came in to assist her husband. Irene Ponson is a visionary, she knew exactly where and how to invest and within a short amount of time in 1970, General Store moved to a better location at the Steenweg. This allowed for a lot more merchandize, products and employees. Supply and demand was as such, that General Store became the number 1 electrical business. Business kept going so well that the location at the Steenweg became too small and was moved later to Dakota Shopping Paradise and later to Pedro Gallego Straat. With this move, an expansion was decided upon

and an electronics store in Savaneta was opened. General Store still being very successful was ready for more growth.

Ricky, Kenneth, Corine and Frans are the fruits of this marriage. Kenneth and Frans however, decided to further develop their father's legacy and continued with their mother's dream to expand the business. An expansion not in square feet only, but in merchandize as well. A great opportunity presented itself when the Ponson family was able to buy a piece of property across from the airport. In 2007 the Ponson family moved into their brand new and huge building. Ponson's General Store now had an electrical department, as housewares department, a paint department and a hardware department.

After a successful opening and expansion, Kenneth and Frans who inherited



their mothers vision, decided that General Store was ready for yet another expansion. With the support of Mr. Tom Barfell and management of Do it Best in the States, the construction of Do it Center commenced.

Fast forward to today. A Do it Center in Aruba, with more than 50.000 top of the line items for interior as well exterior use, building materials, STO products and a top of the line grocery store. Perseverance, responsibility, vision and the courage to invest have made Ponson's General Store as successful as it is today.

Super Do It Center Shaba & Groceries

Located in Shaba, Noord. This is the last sibling of the Do It Center family. Here you will be able to find anything you are looking for. The building is divided into several departments from home to hardware to groceries. Everything under one roof.

Groceries? Visit the fully stocked supermarket with fresh fruits and vegetables and high class meat selections. Highly known products and brands are here for you to grab. Every week Do It Center Groceries offers its weekly special on selected items. Weekly specials are very popular and a perfect chance for you to buy your favorite products at a reduced price.

Need a home makeover? Do not skip the furniture department "Leenbakker". Here, you will find a divine collection of European furniture, worldwide known for their modern and stylish features for your bedroom, bathroom, living room or kitchen. For your garden they have a wide selection of durable furniture specially made for our tropical climate. Take a walk around and find some treasures. Find the perfect accessory for your house, fitted for your personality and style. Modern, elegant, retro industrial, whatever your style is you will definitely find something for your personal taste.

Do it Center Shaba is open from Monday to Saturday from 8AM to 8PM and on Sunday's from 9AM to 6PM.

For more information go to www.doit.aw.



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Aruba is working on the restructuring of its staff in the public sector

ORANJESTAD - In the framework of the Country package (landspakket), the team of the country of Aruba, represented by its Department of Human Resources, is participating in Pressure Cooker Sessions.

The sessions are organized by the Tijdelijke Werk Organisatie Nederland (Temporary Work Organization Netherlands) and Aruba jointly with the Uitvoeringsorganisatie Bedrijfsvoering Rijk (Implementation Organization Central Government).

These sessions have the goal to jointly formulate questions as well as assess market consultations in order to implement the public sector restructuring project, as was agreed in the country package. These work activities and sessions aim to create a more efficient public sector for the community as well as our visitors.

During the week of July 25, the Dutch and Aruban teams will draft the various documents to start this project. □



Aruba to me

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The strong Aruban economic recovery echoed in the performance of Aruba's financial sector in 2021

Oranjestad - Today the Centrale Bank van Aruba (CBA) publishes its financial sector supervision report 2021.

This year's Financial Sector Supervision Report is the tenth annual edition, and provides an overview of the most important developments in the supervisory and regulatory landscape in 2021, as well as of the financial performance of Aruba's financial sector in 2021, also vis-à-vis the prudential requirements in the areas of solvency and liquidity.

Aruba's financial sector continued to show resiliency during the COVID-19 pandemic

In the wake of an unprecedented decline in economic activities in 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the year 2021 can be characterized as a year of strong economic recovery. Although the pandemic is still ongoing, the Aruban economy is expected to continue to recover in 2022 and return to pre-COVID-19 output level by 2023. The banking sector withstood the challenges of the pandemic remarkably well, and remained highly solid and robust. The ample capital and liquidity buffers, in combination with the relief measures of the CBA in the monetary and prudential domains, have helped the banks to weather this storm, and to continue their lending activities uninterrupted. The latter was critical to preventing a deeper economic impact from the COVID-19 pandemic, and played a key role in Aruba's swift economic recovery.

Despite the ongoing economic recovery, downside risks have increased considerably, due to the war in Ukraine and the ensuing sharp rises in the prices of gas and oil, putting additional pressure on an already relatively high inflationary pace, related to global supply shortages and higher transportation prices. This adverse development also may affect the banking sector in Aruba, as both companies and individuals are negatively impacted by the steep rise in inflation,

through, e.g., increased costs of doing business, reduced profitability, and purchasing power. This, on its turn, may bear upon the quality of banks' loan portfolios, resulting in an increase in nonperforming loans and the loan loss provisions that need to be formed against these loans. The CBA will continue to closely monitor the developments in this area.

Ample capital and liquidity buffers

The ample capital and liquidity buffers accumulated over the years, as well as the CBA's strict oversight, have been instrumental in maintaining a solid and reputable financial sector. A sound and solid financial sector is an essential precondition for economic growth and financial stability, also considering that the financial sector's assets have meanwhile reached approximately Afl 13.6 billion (equivalent to USD 7.6 billion) at end-2021, which is more than twice the size of Aruba's 2021 gross domestic product, as estimated by the CBA.

Although the commercial banking sector has in meantime discontinued the COVID-19 related support measures (primarily loan moratoria) to its clients, the nonperforming loan ratio of this sector declined from 5.0 percent at the end of 2020 to 4.7 percent at end-2021, evidencing the strong economic recovery. Also, the financial performance of the commercial banking sector bounced back in 2021, even above pre-pandemic levels, while the capital and liquidity buffers reached record highs, thereby remaining far above the required minimum levels. Additionally, the insurance and pension fund sectors continued to comply with the minimum required coverage ratio, and, thus, their ability to meet their future insurance and pension obligations stayed intact. The COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably shown the importance of banks and other financial institutions having ample cap-

ital and liquidity buffers in place to navigate through unprecedented times like these.

Successful closure of the CFATF mutual evaluation of Aruba's AML/CFT framework During August 31, 2021 to September 10, 2021, the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) visited Aruba to assess in detail the level of compliance with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) 40 Recommendations and the level of effectiveness of Aruba's AML/CFT framework. From March 1, 2022 until March 8, 2022, virtual face-to-face meetings were held to discuss the second draft of the mutual evaluation report (MER). Early April 2022, the CFATF shared the final draft MER with Aruba. This final draft was discussed on June 2, 2022, during the virtual CFATF Plenary meeting. The results are positive and demonstrate a high level of compliance with the FATF standards, both in terms of technical compliance and effectiveness. On July 14, 2022, the final report was published by the CFATF on its website (Fourth Round Mutual Evaluation Report of Aruba (cfatf-gaifc.org)).

Important amendments to the AML/CFT State Ordinance

Following the gap analysis conducted vis-à-vis the 2012 FATF Standards, the CBA drafted a legislative proposal to address the identified, mostly technical, deficiencies in the AML/CFT State Ordinance. This proposal was submitted to the Minister of Finance in August 2018. Based in part on this proposal, a draft amended AML/CFT State Ordinance was sent by the government of Aruba to the Advisory Council in 2020. Subsequently, with due regard to the comments made by the Advisory Council, a revised draft was presented to the Parliament of Aruba for its review and approval. On August 19, 2021, the Parliament of Aruba approved the amended AML/CFT State Ordinance, which entered into force on September 8, 2021.

Introduction State Ordinance Consumer Credit

In June 2016, a draft proposal to regulate consumer credit was submitted to the Minister of Finance. The main objectives are to (i) ensure that consumers receive sufficient information before entering into a consumer loan agreement, to (ii) place a limit on the interest rates that lenders are allowed to charge to consumers, and to (iii) prevent over-crediting. The Government of Aruba submitted a revised draft to the Parliament of Aruba for approval on December 7, 2021. This draft state ordinance was discussed in Parliament on March 23, 2022, but its treatment was postponed as the government of Aruba wanted to amend certain sections of the draft. Following these amendments, on June 3, 2022, the revised draft was approved by Parliament.

Implementation deposit insurance scheme

In May 2017, a (revised) legislative proposal for the introduction of a deposit insurance scheme (DIS) for the domestic commercial banking sector was submitted by the CBA to the Minister of Finance. The implementation of a DIS will help protect small depositors as well as help preserve trust in the banking system, thereby contributing to financial stability. The legal basis to introduce a DIS was adopted by the Parliament of Aruba in December 2021 through an amendment of the State Ordinance on the Supervision of the Credit System (AB 1998 no.16). Currently, the draft state decree regulating the DIS is in the legislative process. A foundation, to be incorporated by the CBA, will be tasked with the management of the guarantee fund. The required preparatory work has already commenced.

Compliance with the Basel Core Principles for Effective Banking Supervision

As part of its ongoing efforts to meet the international standards in the supervisory and regulatory domains, an extensive self-assessment

was undertaken by the CBA in 2020/2021 to evaluate the degree of compliance with the revised Basel Core Principles (BCPs) for Effective Banking Supervision. The outcome of the self-assessment indicates a high level of compliance against these Core Principles. A plan of action has been drafted to address the identified shortcomings on short term, which are mainly related to the absence of some policy papers in the area of operational risk management.

The increasing importance of Cyber Security & IT Supervision

In consideration of the increased cyber security risks, the CBA will step up its oversight efforts in this area. The existence and effectiveness of proper Information Technology (IT) (security) related policies, procedures, and measures at the supervised institutions are critical to ensure safe and sound operations. The policy papers issued by the CBA in the areas of technology risk management, business continuity management, and outsourcing arrangements form the benchmark against which the IT (security) policies, procedures, and measures in place at the supervised financial institutions are assessed by the CBA, through its offsite surveillance (inter alia through surveys and interviews with key persons within the supervised financial institutions) and onsite examinations.

To conclude, also in 2021 the financial sector under the supervision of the CBA remained highly solid and reputable, thanks to the ample solvency and liquidity buffers and the CBA's strict oversight. Nevertheless, the CBA remains vigilant of any adverse developments with the purpose to keep the financial sector sound and reputable, thereby contributing to maintaining financial stability.

The FINANCIAL SECTOR SUPERVISION REPORT 2021 is available on the website of the CBA www.cbaruba.org as of today. □

Interview with Sue Ann Lee

New Dean of FHTMS at the University of Aruba is ready for the challenge

For a long time she was a tourism executive in Aruba, but Sue Ann Lee already has six years giving lectures at the Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management Studies at the University of Aruba. And now, she's the faculty's dean.

Lee, mom of four, decided to take the next challenge in her professional career and she's ready for it. "After working so long in the industry, I applied to work in FHTMS as a lecturer, but on a part-time basis. But as fate would have it, a full-time position became available and I was chosen for it." According to Lee, after working many years in tourism she was interested in sharing not only her own advanced education, but also her knowledge, with the faculty's students. "I wanted to transfer this into education. And at that moment I never thought of becoming a dean."

The experience of working as a tourism executive to then stand in front of a group of young people, mostly people who finished EPI Horeca (advanced

studies in hospitality and tourism) or Colegio Arubano (advanced secondary education) was something completely different. "It's a beautiful experience, because here it has to do with a different generation. I can show examples from Aruba itself. For tourism, you don't need to go far away from home, don't have to go to Disney to understand the problems, the examples that can be used to bring forward the situations described in the books. The experience helps a lot to explain the literature." Lee can use the realities in Aruba to illustrate the subject. "The experience on the field is very valuable, and I use it so that the students can reflect closer to home. They are very critical and we provide them with the opportunity to start thinking more critically about different parts of our tourism and connecting them back to the literature that they must master."

"I can recognize myself in the students. I finished Colegio and went to study in the Netherlands, but at the same time we can see

them grow and develop." FHTMS awards the degree of Bachelor of Science, a three-year study, and it sees the students grow and develop their abilities. "It's very impressive." The new dean illustrates how fascinating it is to see young students start the first year with a lot of reservations, with fear of speaking up, and fear of doing presentations. "And then I can tell them that I also went through a similar experience, and now I stand in front of the class. You develop your abilities, and we want for them to develop theirs, among others, communication but also social abilities. That's the great part."

Sue Ann Lee, with her six years at the University of Aruba saw two groups of students graduate, and it's those moments that fill her with happiness. "It's so impressive to see how a student started to finish their study with the presentation of their thesis, how they grew, and how they present the area that they discovered they like for doing research."

The position of dean is not a fixed position. A dean is the person guiding the faculty, but normally the person is chosen through an election where the staff and student representatives from each year participate. "So we have freshmen, juniors and seniors, and every month there is a faculty-wide meeting. John Wardlaw was in charge of the faculty for almost 12 years and he informed he didn't want to continue. But John for some time already had been saying he didn't want to continue, and even so, we kept voting for him." However, this year Wardlaw left it very clear that he didn't even want to be nominated, much less voted for. He wanted someone else to take his place. "This was like the third time he was saying this. So in my mind, the day was coming and my colleagues were



not reacting. And when he said that, I decided to nominate myself, but giving my colleagues also the space to say if they wanted the position. But no one else applied, so I was the only nominee," Sue Ann said with a laugh.

Even so, she had to go through the voting process. "It's a two-year position, so in two years I must go through another voting process if another colleague wants the position." The voting took place during a faculty meeting where all staff is present, in order to go over study programs, and how the lectures are going. Students also have the opportunity to give their contribution in what they consider important for the lectures, from the lecturers, and the operation of the University. Everyone can bring forward their points and the dean is in charge of guiding the process.

The work becomes then one more administrative, Lee explains. She manages a program, meets with management, and deals with everything the students confront. "I will continue giving lectures, but

fewer hours. I used to give three classes per semester, but now it will be one."

The way in which Lee will manage will be different than Wardlaw, in the sense that she wants everyone to carry more responsibility. "I will continue lecturing, so I can't carry everything." In other words, her management style is to delegate.

Her partner knew that Lee was interested in the position of dean, which has a lot more responsibility, for example of marketing, procedures, and more work hours. "As a lecturer I gave my lectures in the morning and had more flexibility by noon and night. But now there are other activities as part of the job, like events at the University of Aruba. The hours change, I told my children, 'you will see mommy less'" Lee said. "And they knew the baby was coming."

The decision to become dean was before the baby, but for Lee, it's just another challenge to organize, to manage FHTMS beside her responsibilities as a mom of four. There's no reason to doubt that she will succeed.



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

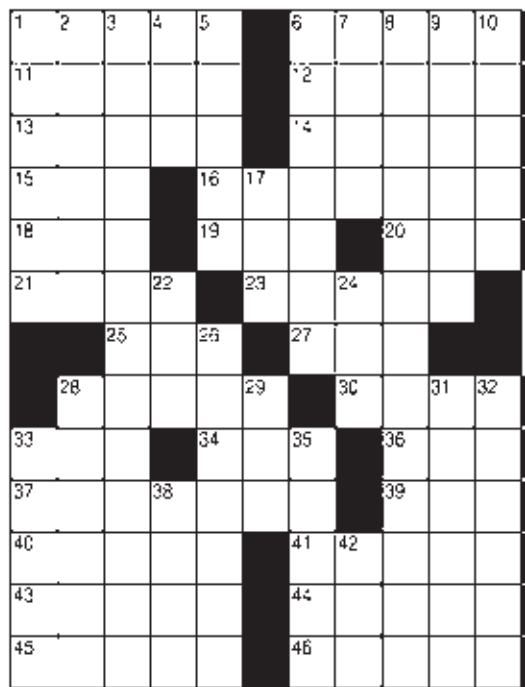
- ACROSS**
- 43 Tightly packed
 - 1 Simple fellow
 - 6 Circus worker
 - 11 Silly
 - 12 In the know
 - 13 Shrinks back
 - 14 Hands over
 - 15 Wee bit
 - 16 Cut in three
 - 18 Peyton's brother
 - 19 Use pews
 - 20 "— a girl!"
 - 21 Monthly bill
 - 23 Secluded spots
 - 25 Fly catcher
 - 27 Supporter's vote
 - 28 Jazz blowers
 - 30 Give off
 - 33 Letter after epsilon
 - 34 Game caller
 - 36 Pitcher's stat
 - 37 Daily grind
 - 39 Nonsense
 - 40 Blockhead
 - 41 Portland setting

DOWN

- 1 Lisa, to Bart
- 2 Get some air
- 3 Attendant to a queen
- 4 Binary digit
- 5 High homes
- 6 Without being said
- 7 Really impresses
- 8 Whoopi Goldberg/ Ted
- 9 Puts up a breather
- 10 Takes a slangily
- 17 Outfit group
- 22 Cowboy nickname
- 24 Shoebox love
- 26 Chides supply
- 28 Out of the sun
- 29 Brief time
- 31 Pressed
- 32 Home runs,
- 33 Lion group
- 35 Leg bone
- 38 Token of love
- 42 Saloon



Yesterday's answer



7-29

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's. X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

7-29

CRYPTOQUOTE

V W D Q P W D A D K A D Q U
C A D K P P F C D A M F Q P W D
N D D X G U Z Q P K F Q M, D T D Q K
G U Q R D O B K Q S D B U G D R F Q C

— B W F Q D M D X A U T D A S

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: WALKING WITH A FRIEND IN THE DARK IS BETTER THAN WALKING ALONE IN THE LIGHT — HELEN KELLER

In a 3rd test, Facebook still fails to block hate speech



The Facebook app is shown in the app store on a smart phone in Surfside, Fla., on April 23, 2021.

Associated Press

By BARBARA ORTUTAY
AP Technology Writer

Facebook is letting violent hate speech slip through its controls in Kenya as it has in other countries, according to a new report from the nonprofit groups Global Witness and Foxglove.

It is the third such test of Facebook's ability to detect hateful language — either via artificial intelligence or human moderators — that the groups have run, and that the company has failed.

The ads, which the groups submitted both in English and in Swahili, spoke of beheadings, rape and bloodshed. They compared people to donkeys and goats. Some also included profanity and grammatical errors. The Swahili language ads easily made it through Facebook's detection systems and were approved for publication.

As for the English ads, some were rejected at first, but only because they contained profanities and mistakes in addition to hate speech. Once the profanities were removed and grammar errors fixed, however, the ads — still calling for killings and containing obvious hate speech — went through without a hitch.

"We were surprised to see that our ads had for the first time been flagged, but they hadn't been flagged for the much more important reasons that we expected them to be," said Nienke Palstra, senior cam-

paigner at London-based Global Witness.

The ads were never posted to Facebook. But the fact that they easily could have been shows that despite repeated assurances that it would do better, Facebook parent Meta still appears to regularly fail to detect hate speech and calls for violence on its platform.

Global Witness said it reached out to Meta after its ads were accepted for publication but did not receive a response. On Thursday, however, Global Witness said it did receive a response earlier in July but it was lost in a spam folder. Meta also confirmed Thursday it sent a response.

"We've taken extensive steps to help us catch hate speech and inflammatory content in Kenya, and we're intensifying these efforts ahead of the election. We have dedicated teams of Swahili speakers and proactive detection technology to help us remove harmful content quickly and at scale," Meta said in a statement. "Despite these efforts, we know that there will be examples of things we miss or we take down in error, as both machines and people make mistakes. That's why we have teams closely monitoring the situation and addressing these errors as quickly as possible."

Each time Global Witness has submitted ads with blatant hate speech to see if Facebook's systems would catch it, the company

failed to do so. In Myanmar, one of the ads used a slur to refer to people of east Indian or Muslim origin and call for their killing. In Ethiopia, the ads used dehumanizing hate speech to call for the murder of people belonging to each of Ethiopia's three main ethnic groups — the Amhara, the Oromo and the Tigrayans. Why ads and not regular posts? That's because Meta claims to hold advertisements to an "even stricter" standard than regular, unpaid posts, according to its help center page for paid advertisements.

Meta has consistently refused to say how many content moderators it has in countries where English is not the primary language. This includes moderators in Kenya, Myanmar and other regions where material posted on the company's platforms has been linked to real-world violence.

Kenya is readying for a national election in August. On July 20, Meta posted a detailed blog post on how it is preparing for the country's election, including establishing an "operations center" and removing harmful content.

"In the six months leading up to April 30, 2022, we took action on more than 37,000 pieces of content for violating our Hate Speech policies on Facebook and Instagram in Kenya. During that same period, we also took action on more than 42,000 pieces of content that violated our Violence & Incitement policies," wrote Mercy Ndegwa, director of public policy in East & Horn of Africa.

Global Witness said it resubmitted two of its ads, one in English and one in Swahili, after Meta published its blog post to see if anything has changed. Once again, the ads went through.

"If you're not catching these 20 ads, this 37,000 number that you are celebrating, that is probably the tip of the iceberg. You have to think that there's a lot that's (slipping through) your filter," Palstra said. □

Bacteria that causes rare tropical disease found in U.S. soil

By MIKE STOBBE
AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A germ that causes a rare and sometimes deadly disease long thought to be confined to tropical climates has been found in soil and water in the continental United States, U.S. health officials said Wednesday. The bacteria was found on the property of a Mississippi man who had come down with the disease, melioidosis. Officials don't know how long it had been there, but they say it likely is occurring in other areas along the Gulf Coast.

U.S. physicians should consider melioidosis even in patients who haven't traveled to other countries, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a health alert.

"Once it's in the soil, it can be a health threat for people in the area," said the CDC's Julia Petras, who oversaw the investigation. The illness can start with a wide range of symptoms like fever, joint pain and headaches. It's treatable with the right antibiotics if it's caught early, but it can lead to pneumonia, blood infections and even death if not properly treated.

About 12 cases are reported annually in the U.S. The vast majority have been in people who traveled to places where the bacteria is endemic, including cer-



This photo provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention depicts a petri plate containing multiple colonies of Gram-negative *Burkholderia pseudomallei* bacteria.

Associated Press

tain regions of Australia, Thailand, and Central and South America.

People can get the illness through direct contact with contaminated soil and water, especially if they have a cut on their hand or foot. It is also possible to inhale the bacteria.

The bacteria may not bother healthy people. But it can be dangerous to those with diabetes, chronic kidney or lung disease and weakened immune systems.

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and the other, who lives about 10 miles away, got it this year.

Both have recovered.

Health officials didn't say exactly where in Mississippi the men live, but investigators took 109 soil and water samples from the area. The bacteria was found in three spots — two in soil and one in a puddle — on the property of the man who was sickened two years ago. □



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GOLD SEASON

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2 Bed Garden view \$6,000
3 Bed Ocean view \$13,000

Marriott Aruba Ocean Club PLATINUM SEASON

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1 Bed ocean front \$16,500
1 Bed ocean view \$12,000

GOLD SEASON

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Red Cross	582 2219

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Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
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American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

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Narcotics Anonymous
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Fundacion Contra Violencia
Relacional Tel. 583 5400

Centre for Diabetes
Tel. 524 8888

Child Abuse Prevention
Tel. 582 4433

Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

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Q&A: Melissa Barrera survives, on screen and in Hollywood

By **SIGAL RATNER-ARIAS**

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Since her breakthrough role as Vanessa in the film adaptation of "In The Heights," Melissa Barrera has been working non-stop on the big and small screen. Only this year, she appeared in "Scream 5" and is filming a sequel, and stars in the upcoming Benjamin Millepied's reimagining of the opera "Carmen" and Lori Evans Taylor's "Bed Rest," which she also produced.

Starting Thursday, the Mexican actress can be seen in "Keep Breathing," a Netflix miniseries about the lone survivor of a plane crash in the middle of the Canadian wilderness.

Barrera — along with Ana de Armas — is among the few Hispanic actresses given a wide variety of roles, far beyond the characters Latinas have been allowed to play, while the discussion about the lack of representation continues in Hollywood.

"It's so easy for the industry to just keep us in the corner and keep us on a side lane and just give us these certain opportunities that they have designated are for us," Barrera said in a recent interview with The Associated Press from Montreal, where she is shooting "Scream 6." "If we



This image provided by Netflix shows Melissa Barrera as Liv in an episode of the television series "Keep Breathing."

don't fight to come to the center lanes, they're going to keep us on the sidelines the entire time."

"I crave the kind of representation where my identity is not the center and the most important part about the story that we're telling," she added. "I know it's necessary, and we do need the Latino and Latina stories to be getting told, and I want to do that. But I also just want to tell stories."

In "Keep Breathing," Barrera, 32, plays New York lawyer Liv, a cold, work-oriented woman who has

to battle an unforgiving wilderness and past personal traumas to survive. It was a very demanding role that got her to the point of exhaustion fast, but the actress says she pushed through and used that in her performance, which she also fueled with traits of her younger self.

Answers have been edited for brevity and clarity.

AP: The series starts with the plane crash. Have you ever had a nerve-racking experience in the air?

BARRERA: I'm pretty chill

in planes. Literally, do not have a care in the world. I have never had bad turbulence. I've never had an air pocket where the plane drops. I've never had an experience where the plane like touches and goes back, you know, like those kinds of things that would make your stomach drop. Never had that! So, I'm not scared of planes at all.

AP: How did you handle that scene then?

BARRERA: I mean, I've had dreams of plane crashes. I have this recurring dream where I'm on a plane and

I look out the window and there's another plane that's coming straight towards us, and right before they're going to crash into us, I wake up, every time. It's terrifying. I don't know, you just channel some other fear. I channel the idea of dying and not getting to see my family ever again, and my loved ones. That's usually what I go to. And also it helped that they built this incredible rig, and they put a plane on it. It was like a Disneyland ride. The plane would move and shake, and that helps also.

AP: It looks like a very demanding role, both physically and emotionally. Was it as hard as it seems?

BARRERA: It was harder. (Laughs.) I knew going into it, because of the nature of the show — you're outside, I'm alone most of the time, it's very physical and also the emotional arc is so intense. I feel like it's actually a survival show about surviving your mind, surviving your insecurities, your childhood traumas. It's all about mental survival, and I knew that it was going to be hard, so I prepared myself emotionally, mentally. That normally works in every single thing that I do: I don't get tired, I can do the whole shoot and then, at the end, I need to be in bed for a week. □

Anthony Fauci's life, work during COVID are PBS film's focus

By **LYNN ELBER**

AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Dr. Anthony Fauci and his tumultuous experience during the COVID-19 pandemic are the focus of a PBS "American Masters" documentary.

The film follows Fauci at home and at work during a 14-month period starting from President Joe Biden's inauguration in January 2021, PBS announced Wednesday.

"Tony — A Year in the Life of Dr. Anthony Fauci" is set to debut on the PBS "American Masters" showcase in spring 2023, following a planned release in movie theaters.

It will show "a rarely seen side of the scientist, husband, father and public servant," Paula Kerger, PBS president and CEO, told a TV critics' meeting.

Fauci, 81, the government's top infectious disease expert, said recently that he plans to retire by the end of Biden's term in January 2025. He has served as director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases since 1984 and advised seven presidents.

The pandemic represented an unprecedented challenge for Fauci, his work and his reputation despite his years of widely respected public health service.

He's led research in HIV/AIDS, respiratory infections, Ebola, Zika and the coronavirus.

The film follows Fauci "at home, in his office and in the corridors of power as he battles the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the political onslaught that upends his life and calls into question" his long career as the nation's leading public health advocate, according to the announcement. Mark Mannucci, who directed the 2019 "American Masters" documentary on the Nobel Prize-winning scientist James Watson, directed and is a producer for the Fauci film. □



Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, speaks during the daily briefing at the White House in Washington, Dec. 1, 2021.

Associated Press

Harden, 76ers make it official on 2-year, \$68 million deal

By DAN GELSTON

AP Sports Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) —

James Harden decided to grow his beard and shear his annual salary in Philadelphia.

Harden signed a deal worth slightly over \$68 million, paying him about \$33 million this season with a \$35 million player option for the 2023-24 season. Harden, though, will make about \$14.5 million less this coming season than he could have earned under his previous deal. Harden had a \$47.4 million option for this coming season that he declined last month, saying he wanted to give the 76ers flexibility to improve their roster and compete for a championship.

"This is where I want to be. This is where I want to win, and I think we have the pieces to accomplish that goal," Harden said Wednesday. "From my first day with the 76ers organization, the team and the fans have helped me feel at home here in Philadelphia. I'm excited to build off of last season and I can't wait to get out on the court with the guys and start this journey." Daryl Morey, team presi-



Philadelphia 76ers' James Harden reacts during the first half of Game 4 of an NBA basketball second-round playoff series against the Miami Heat on May 8, 2022, in Philadelphia.

Associated Press

dent of basketball operations, posted a photo on Instagram of him posing alongside Harden as the 10-time All-Star guard known as "The Beard" signed his contract. "Now this looks like a job for we," Morey wrote. Harden's plans have been clear since Philadelphia's season ended: He was committed to staying with the 76ers and committed to help them get better.

"Taking less money this year to sign as many players as we needed to help us contend and be the last team standing was very, very important to me," Harden said in an interview this month with The Associated Press. "I wanted to show the organization, the Sixers fans and everybody else who supports what we're trying to accomplish, what I'm trying to accomplish individually,

that this is what I'm about." Harden vowed to return to for after battling a lingering hamstring injury that cut his production with the Brooklyn Nets, and later the Sixers, after he was acquired in a trade-deadline deal. "Over the last two years we have taken major steps toward our ultimate goal of becoming champions," said coach Doc Rivers. "James shares our drive to

win a title, and he believes being a 76er gives him the best opportunity to do that. Together, we will work tirelessly to achieve our goal."

A member of the NBA's 75th Anniversary Team, Harden averaged 22 points this season for Brooklyn and Philadelphia, his lowest since he became a starter in the 2012-13 season. He turns 33 in August.

Harden, a three-time scoring champion, told the AP he was nonplussed about taking "less" money to return and chase a championship in Philly.

"For any other players, that's a max contract," he said of his lower numbers, "but it's like, for me, I was not the same James Harden."

The 76ers lost to top-seeded Miami in the second round of the playoffs. Harden had four turnovers, four baskets and did not score in the second half in the decisive Game 6 loss. They haven't advanced past the second round since 2001. Their last NBA championship came in 1983.

"Coming back and being the aggressor, the scorer first and then the playmaker, is something that I need for myself," he said. □

Trout, sidelined with back issues, says 'career is not over'

By DAVE SKRETTA

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) —

Mike Trout appreciated all the support he received Wednesday after the Los Angeles Angels' head trainer revealed the three-time AL MVP had a "rare" spinal condition that could affect him for the rest of his career.

Even if Trout thought the whole thing was blown out of proportion.

"I think he meant that I have to stay on top of the routine I do on a daily basis to keep it from coming back," Trout said after watching his Angels beat the Kansas City Royals 4-0 to clinch their first series win in nearly a month. "I'm appreciative of all the prayer requests," he added, "but my career is not over."

The 10-time All-Star left a game against Houston on

July 12 with what was first called back spasms, then went on the injured list a week later with what was called rib cage inflammation.

On Wednesday, Angels trainer Mike Forstad revealed it to be a rare spinal condition, saying it's something Trout "has to manage not just through the rest of the season."

"I got back and my phone was blowing up: 'My career is over,'" Trout said, smiling at the absurdity of the over-reactions he'd been seeing online. "It's just rare for a baseball player. I just have to stay on top of it."

Trout has been examined by Dr. Robert Watkins III, a top back specialist and the co-director of the Marina Spine Clinic in Los Angeles, and received a cortisone injection last week that has

already begun to produce results.

He has a follow-up visit next week and "we'll go from there," he said, though he has every intention of being back this year.

"Of course," he said. "That's my goal."

The Angels have had no discussions about shutting him down.

"I don't think we're at a point where we're going to make that decision," Forstad said. "He's going to have a follow-up here once we get back and we'll just kind of see what the doctor thinks at that point."

Trout, the second-highest paid player in the game at \$37.1 million, had been enjoying a nice bounce-back season after a calf injury limited him to just 36 games last season. He was hitting .270 with 24 homers and 51



Los Angeles Angels' Mike Trout, left, and Shohei Ohtani enter the field during batting practice a day before the 2022 MLB All-Star baseball game, Monday, July 18, 2022, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

RBIs through 79 games, a rare bright spot in what has been a dismal season for the Angels.

"He's been a great teammate," Angels interim manager Phil Nevin said. "He's been the dugout, helping

out his teammate — he's obviously a good sounding board for a lot of young players. For them to have him here and know that he's supporting them is huge, I'm sure, for some younger guys." □

Castano hit on head by 104 mph liner in Marlins' 7-6 win

CINCINNATI (AP) — Daniel Castano was hit on the forehead by a 104 mph line drive off the bat of Donovan Solano in the first inning of the Miami Marlins' 7-6 win over the Cincinnati Reds on Thursday.

The ball hit the bill of his cap and ricocheted off the crown, manager Don Mattingly said. The team said Castano showed mild concussion symptoms and was bruised, and a CT scan was normal.

"I'm not sure what happened," Castano said after the game, wearing a bandage on his forehead where some skin had scraped off. "I was down for a second. I was a little out of it. When I woke up, I asked, 'What happened?' I'm much better now. I'm a little bit tired, but I'll be all right."

The 27-year-old left-hander fell to the field on his knees and held a hand to his head as Mattingly, catcher Jacob Stallings and athletic trainers went to the mound to check on him. Castano did not appear to lose consciousness, and the door on the outfield fence opened



Miami Marlins catcher Jacob Stallings, left, checks on starting pitcher Daniel Castano after he was hit by a line drive by Cincinnati Reds' Donovan Solano during the first inning of a baseball game Thursday, July 28, 2022, in Cincinnati.

Associated Press

as a cart prepared to enter the field before Castano walked off on his own.

"It's a little bit scary," Mattingly said after talking on the phone with Reds manager David Bell, who called to check on Castano. "Your

biggest fear is damage. He's about as good as could be expected."

"It is really awful to see that happen to anyone," Bell said. "I've seen it happen before. I had a conversation to see that every thing

was OK. It is just a major relief to hear that. It's very scary for everyone involved, certainly for their pitcher and their home team and our team. You almost want to stop playing the game. When he was kneeling and walked off on his own, we all felt a little better."

Castano rose to his feet about 90 seconds later and left the field under his own power, a towel draped over his neck, after Solano walked over, put a hand on his shoulder and spoke with the pitcher.

The ball was hit so hard it caromed to third baseman Joey Wendle, who caught it for the out.

"I'm just glad we got the out," Castano said, smiling. Castano faced just five batters before getting hurt. He is 2-7 in 17 starts and five relief appearances in his big league career. He was recalled from Triple-A Jacksonville to make the start.

"They say the farther it goes, the better off you are," Mattingly said. "If it hits you and drops straight down, that means you caught it flush." Castano said he had never before been hit by a comebacker.

"That's terrifying," Reds starter Graham Ashcraft said. "You never want to see a

player hurt like that. I was waiting to see blood coming out. I thought he got hit in cheek or his eye bone or something.

I am hoping he's OK. My prayers go out to him and his family. I hope he can come back and make his next start."

Before the game, the Marlins said 23-year-old right-hander Max Meyer will have Tommy John surgery. Meyer left his second major league start on Friday in Pittsburgh after throwing 10 pitches.

Miami earned a split of the four-game series by overcoming a 5-4, ninth-inning deficit. Pinch-hitter Jesús Sánchez led off the inning with a home run off Hunter Strickland (2-3), who walked Luke Williams and hit Stallings with a pitch.

Wendle hit a go-ahead double against Buck Farmer, and Jesús Aguilar followed with sacrifice fly for his fourth RBI. Aguilar finished a triple shy of the cycle.

Zach Pop (2-0), the sixth of seven Marlins pitchers, threw a perfect eighth.

Tanner Scott overcame a pair of two-out walks and Tommy Pham's RBI single for his 14th save in 18 chances, striking out Joey Votto for the final out with two on.

Strickland blew a save for the third time in nine chances.

Ashcraft allowed four runs — three earned — and eight hits in 6 2/3 innings.

Tyler Naquin homered for the Reds.

The crowd of 14,506 was Cincinnati's 24th under 15,000 this season. □



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